

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

## CURRENT NEEDS & GAPS REPORT



*Rev. 03/31/2016*

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

## Report

This is a visual report that describes 1) the number and characteristics of the homeless population in Austin and Travis County, 2) their current needs, 3) our current community public investments to address homelessness, 4) gaps in services, and 5) what we see as the main trends and takeaways.

## Acknowledgements

This report was created by staff at the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO). The lead researcher and writer was Mariana Salazar, Director of Research and Evaluation with the support of Katy Manganello (HMIS Director), Richard Dodson (HMIS Administrator), Preston Petty (Coordinated Assessment Director) Ann Howard (Executive Director), and Prachi Patel (UT-Austin School of Architecture intern).

## Methodology

Most of the data presented in this report was extracted from our Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) and comes from various sources including surveys from our *Coordinated Assessment* process, our annual *Point-in-Time Count* and our *Housing Inventory Count*. Supplemental data was used from the American Community Survey, other local studies and interviews from staff working on the ground with persons experiencing homelessness.

We hope this information is helpful in efforts to improve programs, plan community investments, and shape local policies. We encourage users to borrow and cite this material.

## Questions or Comments?

For questions or for more information, please contact Ann Howard (Executive Director) at [annhoward@austinecho.org](mailto:annhoward@austinecho.org) or Mariana Salazar (Director of Research and Evaluation) at [marianasalazar@austinecho.org](mailto:marianasalazar@austinecho.org).

# MORE ABOUT OUR DATA SOURCES

## Coordinated Assessment

- *It is the process through which persons experiencing homelessness in Austin and Travis County are surveyed with one standard tool made up of 50 questions that assess a person's health and well-being. The tool is called the VI-SPDAT.*
- *A person's score on the tool is used to prioritize their level of vulnerability compared to other homeless persons in the community who have been assessed with the same tool. Given our limited resources, our community prioritizes to first serve those most vulnerable.*
- *Since October 2014, over 5,000 persons have been assessed through this Coordinated Assessment process. Given the wealth of information collected through these 5,000+ surveys and its large sample size, this data is one of the main sources of information on this report.*
- *Coordinated Assessment is a process required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for communities receiving HUD funds. In Austin, it was launched by our partner agencies Caritas of Austin, Front Steps, Salvation Army and Austin Travis County Integral Care.*

## Annual Point-in-Time Homeless Count data

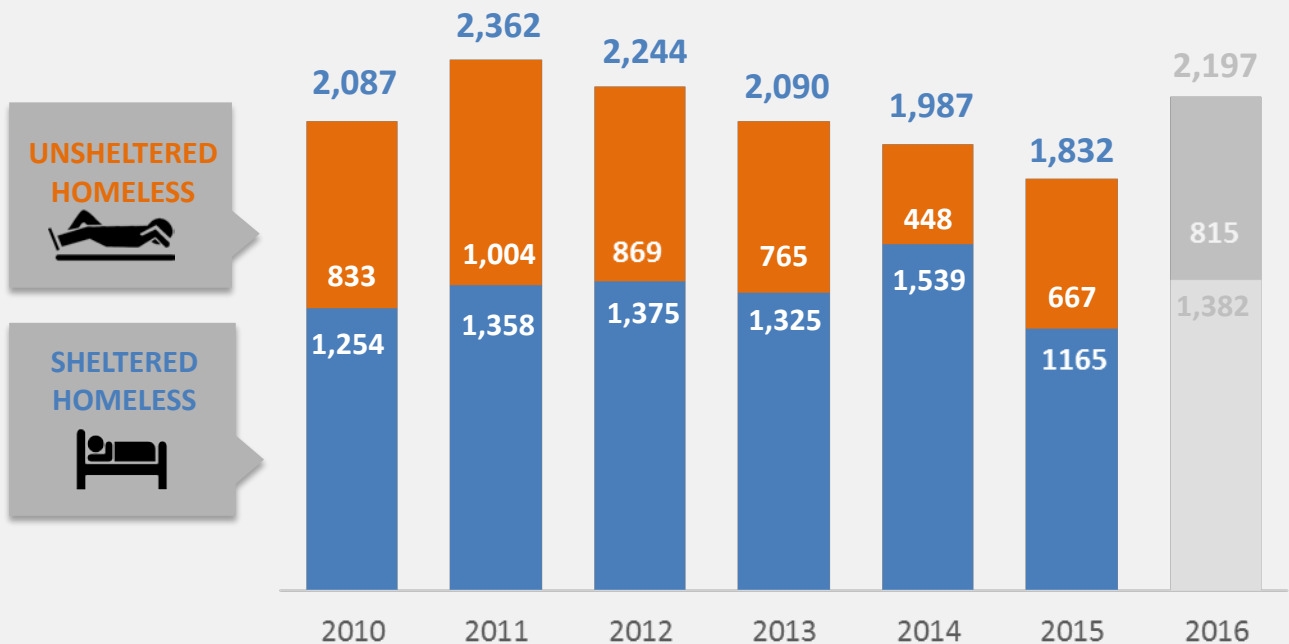
- *Every year, communities around the country count the number of persons sleeping in shelters, in the streets or other places not meant for human habitation on a given day.*
- *The count is required by HUD for communities receiving HUD funding. It takes place during the last week of January every year. It provides a one-day snapshot on the number of persons that are literally homeless.*

## Annual Housing Inventory Count

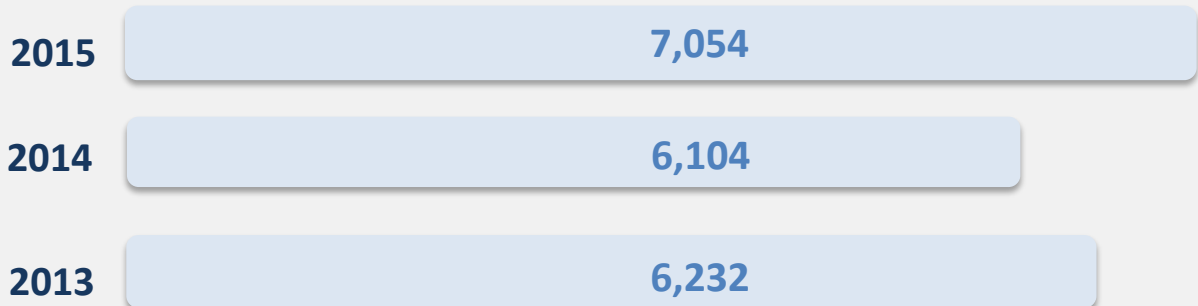
- *Every year, communities around the country count the number of beds dedicated to persons experiencing homelessness, including shelter beds, beds in transitional housing or permanent supportive housing programs.*
- *The count is required by HUD for communities receiving HUD funding and takes place during the last week of January every year on the same day of the point-in-time count. This count provides a one-day snapshot of the number of beds dedicated to serving persons experiencing homelessness.*

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN OVER THE YEARS

## Snapshot of persons experiencing homelessness on a given day

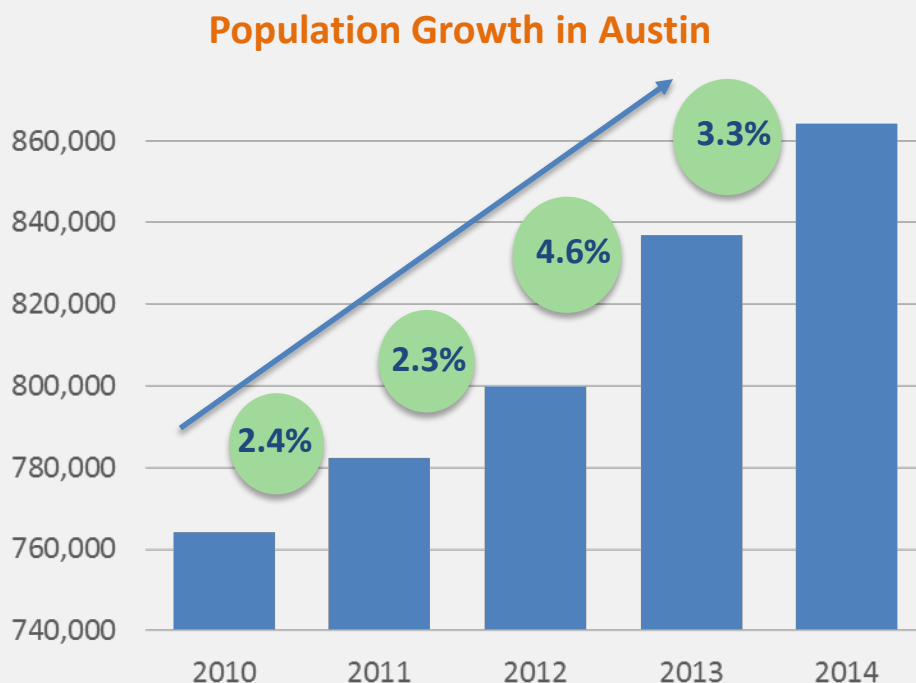


## Annual count of persons experiencing homelessness on a given year



# WHY IS OUR HOMELESS POPULATION GROWING IN AUSTIN?

- *Are more people falling into homelessness?*
- *Are we getting better at counting more people that were already homeless?*
- *How is the homeless population being affected by Austin's demographic changes?*
- *Are some of the people who are moving to Austin everyday, falling into homelessness?*
- *Is minimum wage too small to support increased costs of living like rent?*
- *How is the tight rental market that Austin is experiencing & the affordability crisis, affecting the rate of the newly homeless? How is it affecting our ability to improve our housing placement rate?*



**Population increased over 100,000 from 2010-2014**  
**Expected to double every 20 years**  
**Fastest growing large (500K+) city in the U.S. from 2010-2013**

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

## WHERE ARE PEOPLE SLEEPING?

Places not meant for human habitation



**Shelter**

**34.4%**



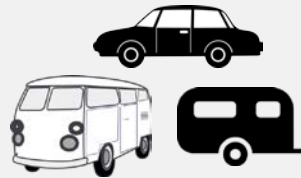
**Street  
Sidewalk or  
Doorway**

**25.7%**



**Beach  
Riverbed  
Park**

**15.7%**



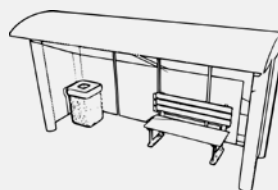
**Car  
Van  
RV**

**13.1%**



**Other  
(e.g. Bridges,  
Abandoned Buildings)**

**9.2%**



**Bus  
Train**

**1.9%**

# WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN?

## S N A P S H O T

Over 7,000 persons experienced homelessness in 2015  
staying in the streets, cars, parks and shelters



80.0%

are unemployed  
(no earned income)



79.7%

are individuals



61.8%

are males



60%

report a problem  
with drugs/alcohol  
sometime in their lifetime



45.0%

report having a current  
mental health problem



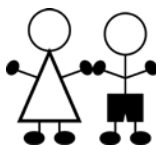
28.3%

have experienced  
domestic violence  
in their lifetime



22.1%

are chronically homeless



19.9%

are children

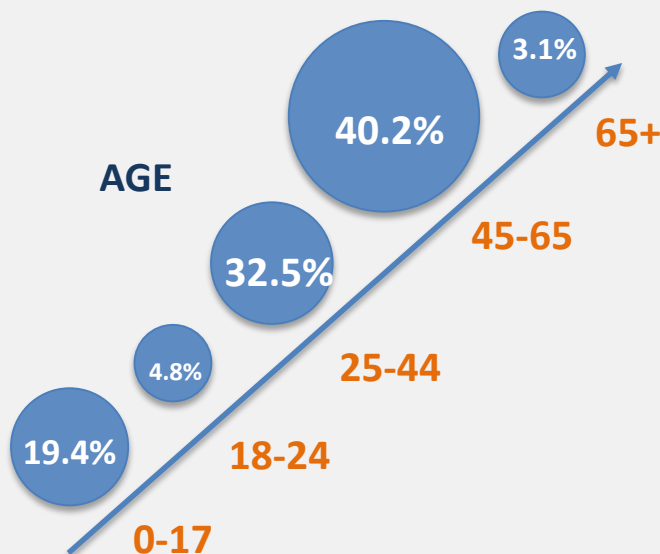
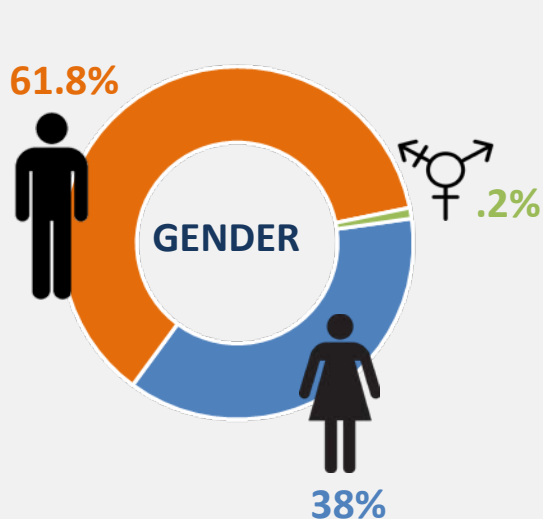


14.4%

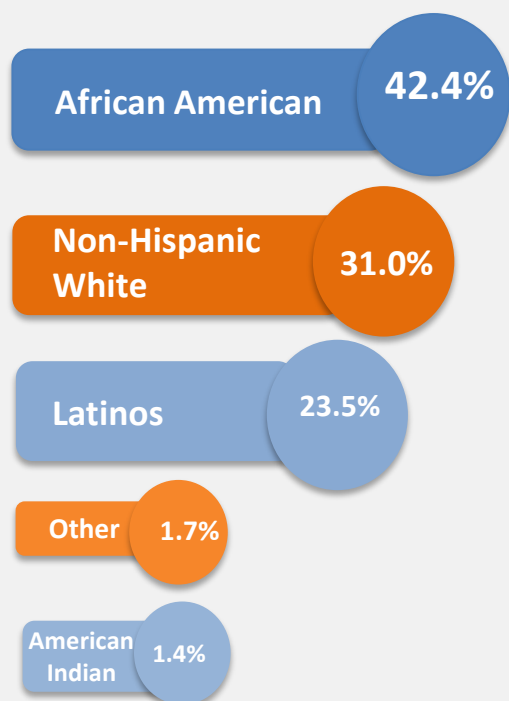
are veterans

# WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN?

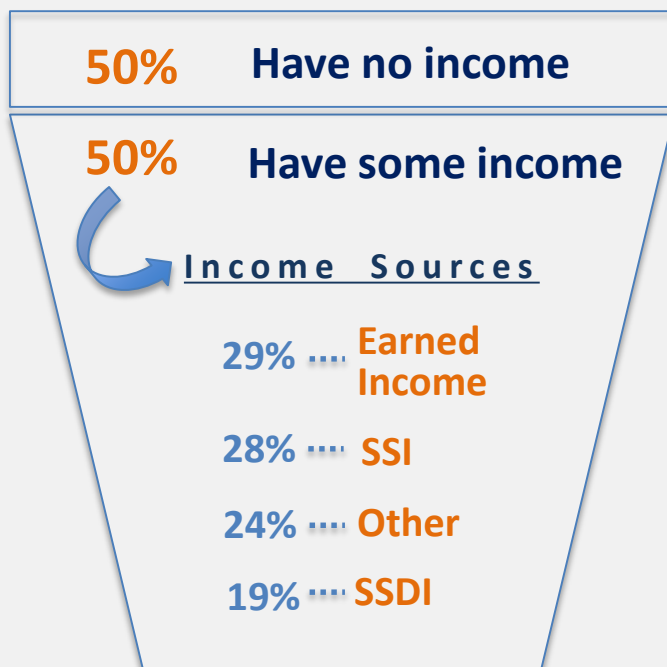
## DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE + ETHNICITY



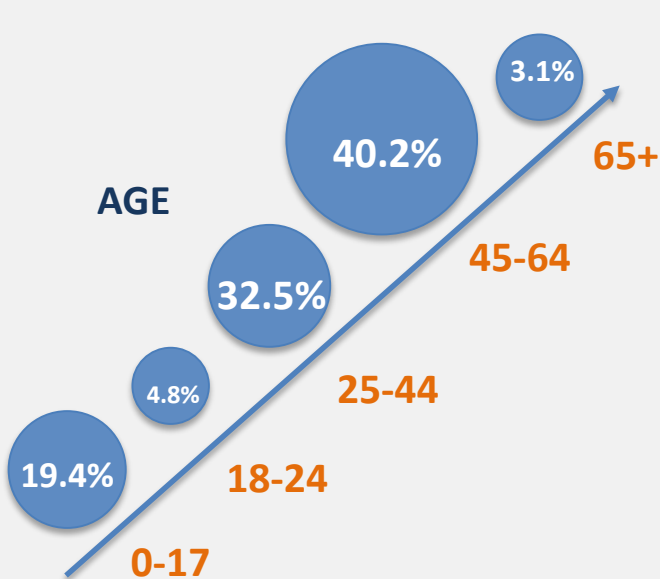
### HOUSEHOLD INCOME



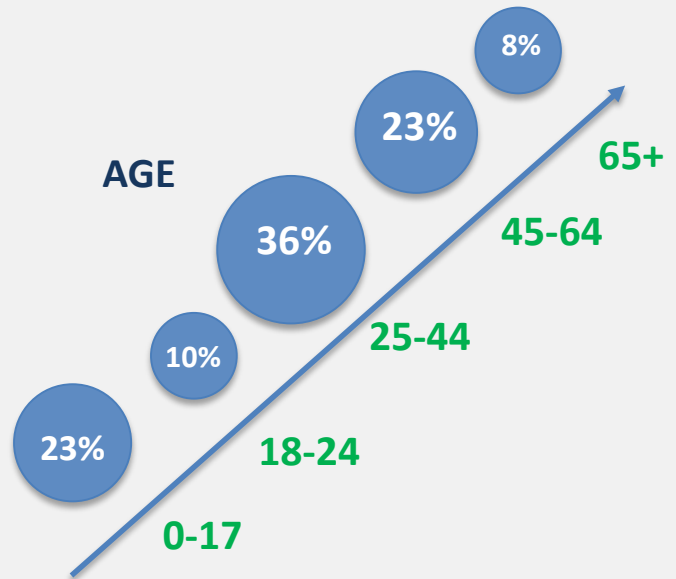


# COMPARISON

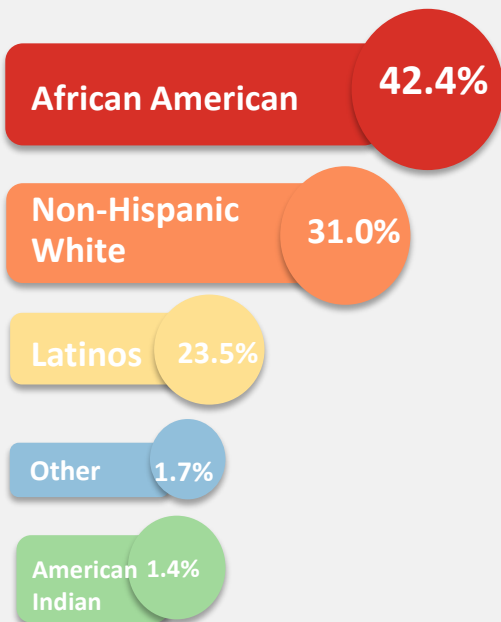
## HOMELESS POPULATION IN TRAVIS COUNTY



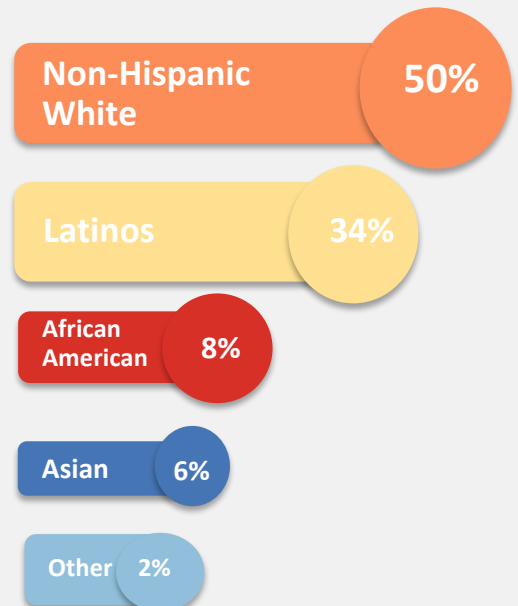
## ALL TRAVIS COUNTY RESIDENTS



## RACE + ETHNICITY



## RACE + ETHNICITY



# HOMELESSNESS + HEALTH IN AUSTIN

## DRUGS OR ALCOHOL

**60%**

report a problem  
with drugs/alcohol  
sometime in their  
lifetime

**38.2%**

report having been  
treated and returning  
to drinking or using  
drugs

**15%**

report consuming  
almost every day  
or every day for  
the past month

## CHRONIC CONDITIONS

**25.7%**

report a history of heat  
stroke and heat  
exhaustion

**25.1%**

report a history of  
heart disease,  
Arrhythmia or  
irregular heartbeat

**19.8%**

report a history  
of Hepatitis C

## MENTAL HEALTH

**48%**

report speaking to a  
mental health  
professional in  
the past 6 months

**45%**

report having a current  
mental health problem

**20%**

report having been  
taking to the hospital  
for a mental health  
reason

# HOMELESSNESS + HEALTH IN AUSTIN

## Health Care Access



**62.8%**

report having been in the  
emergency room in the  
past 6 months



**39.9%**

report having been  
taken to the hospital  
in an ambulance in the  
past 6 months



**32.8%**

report having  
been hospitalized  
in the last 6  
months

## Where do the homeless report going for care when they are not feeling well?

**Hospital**

**41.4%**

**Clinic**

**30.6%**

Do not  
go for care

**16.6%**

**VA**

**10%**

**Other**

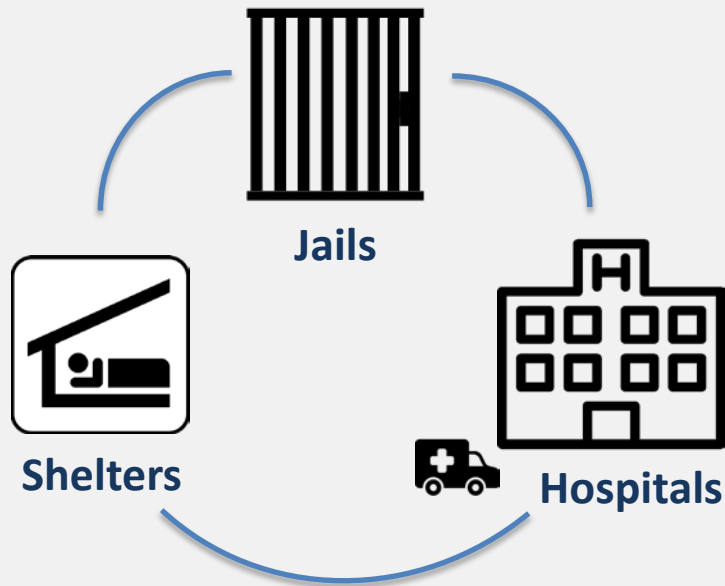
**1.4%**

**Well-  
being**

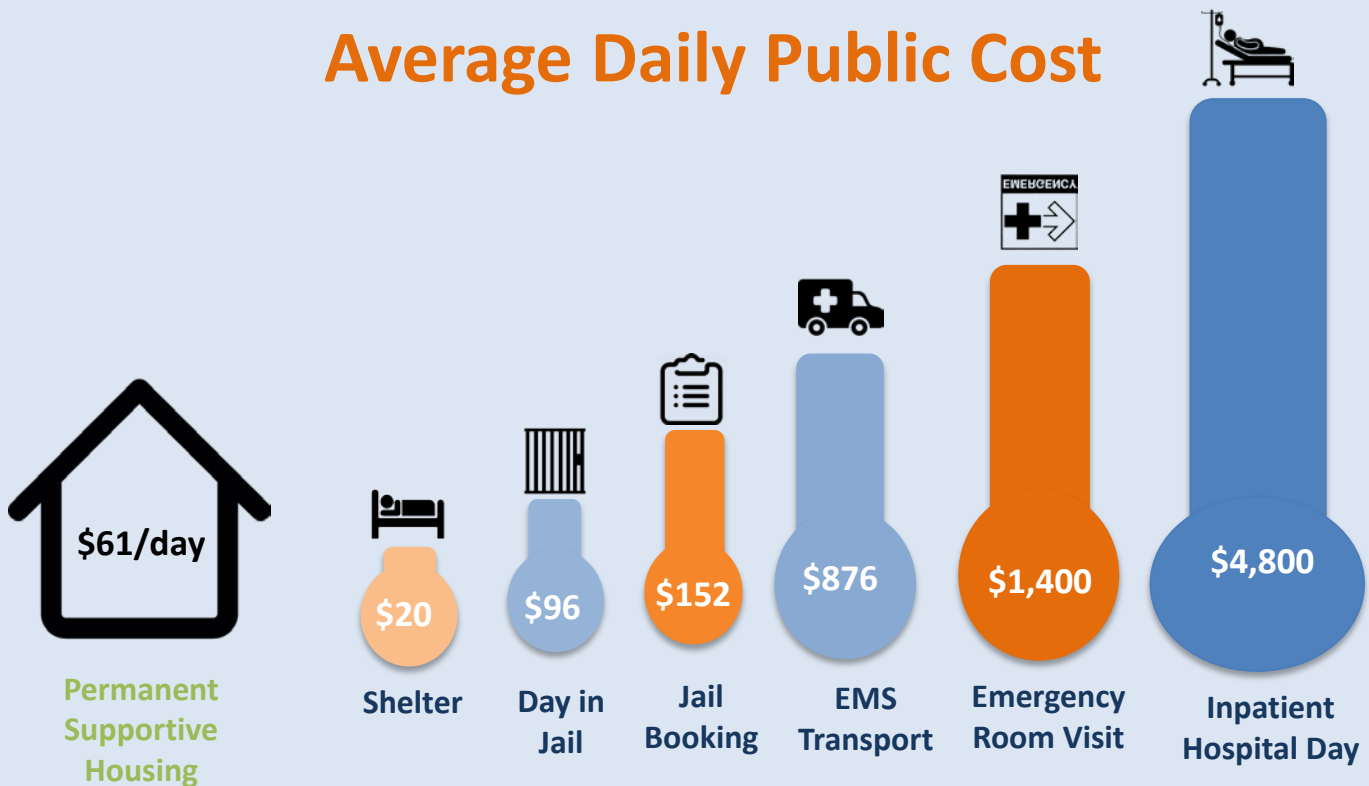
**52%**

Report having no planned  
activities that bring them  
happiness or fulfillment

# THE CASE FOR SOME OF THE HOMELESS IN AUSTIN: A REVOLVING DOOR BETWEEN CRISIS CENTERS



## Average Daily Public Cost



# Annual Average Health Costs

for top 250 High-Cost Homeless Users in Travis Co.

## Current Encounters/Person

## Costs/Person

Inpatient  
Hospital  
Days



37 days @ \$4,800/day

\$178K/year

Emergency  
Room  
Visits



21 visits @ \$1,400/visit

\$30K/year

EMS  
Transports

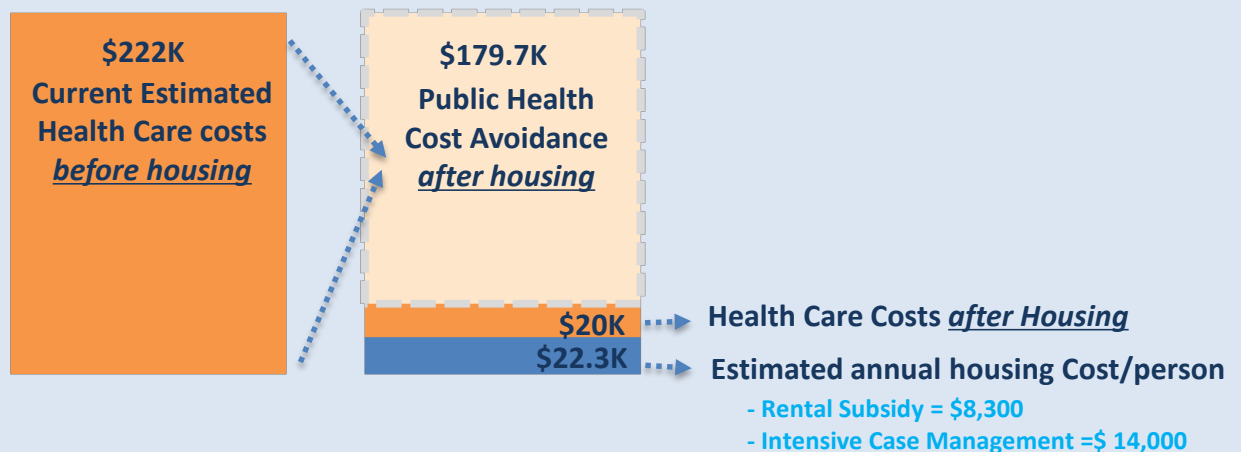


19 transport @ \$876/transport

\$14K/year

**Average total annual cost per person: \$222K**

## Sample estimated benefit of Permanent Supportive Housing



# FREQUENT RENTAL HOUSING BARRIERS

## for the Homeless Population in Austin

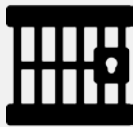
### CRIMINAL BACKGROUND



Charged with  
*misdemeanors*



No renting  
if it happened  
recently



Charged with  
*felonies*



No renting  
at all

### INCOME/ DEBT



Low or  
no *income*



No renting,  
even if benefit  
program covers  
income



Usage of  
*vouchers*



Landlords not  
taking vouchers



Rental or  
utility *debt*,  
bankruptcy

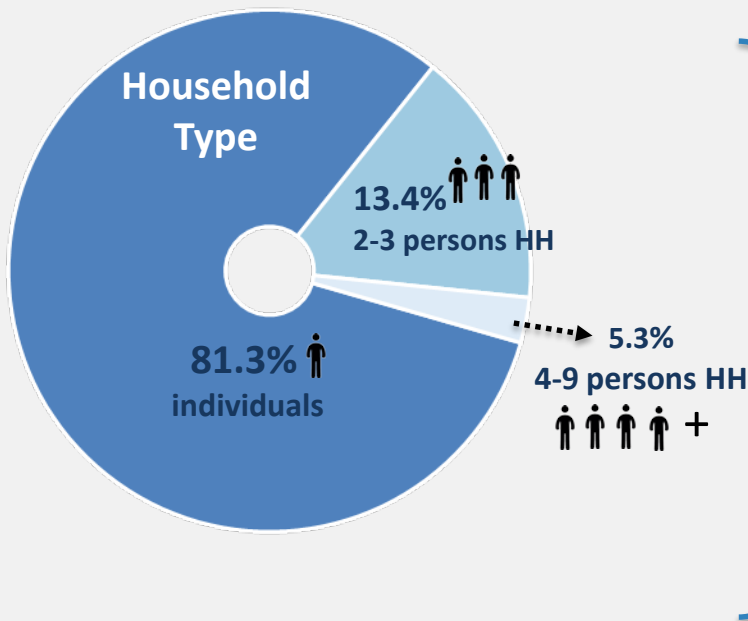


Screened out  
if outstanding

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

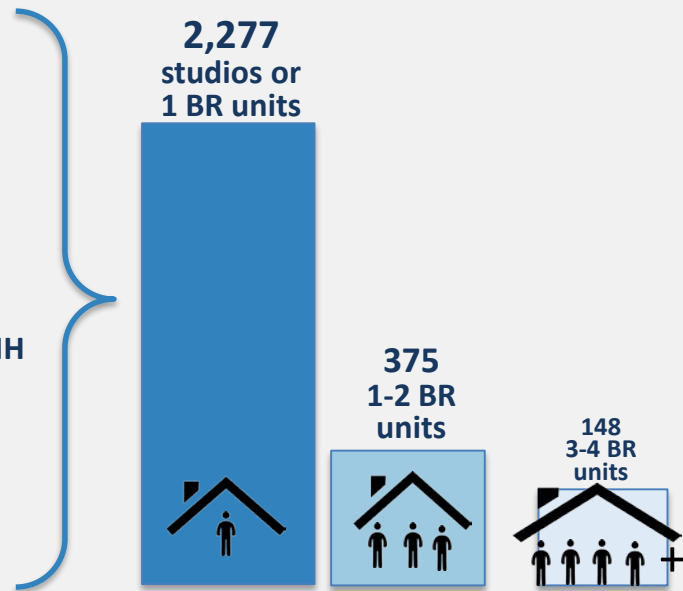
## KNOWN CURRENT NEED FOR 2,800 HOUSEHOLDS (3,700 persons)

### POPULATION

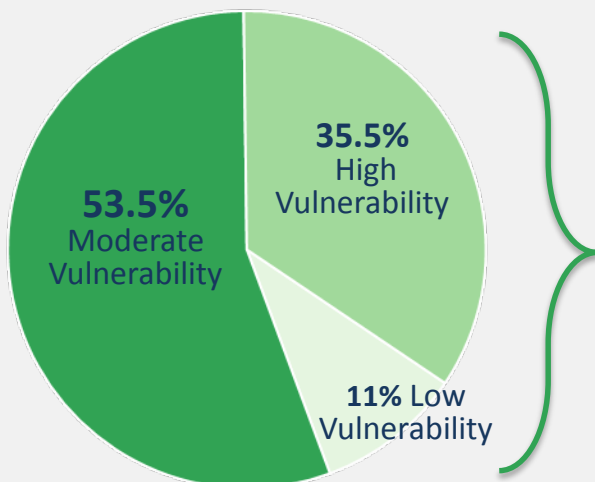


### HOUSING NEED

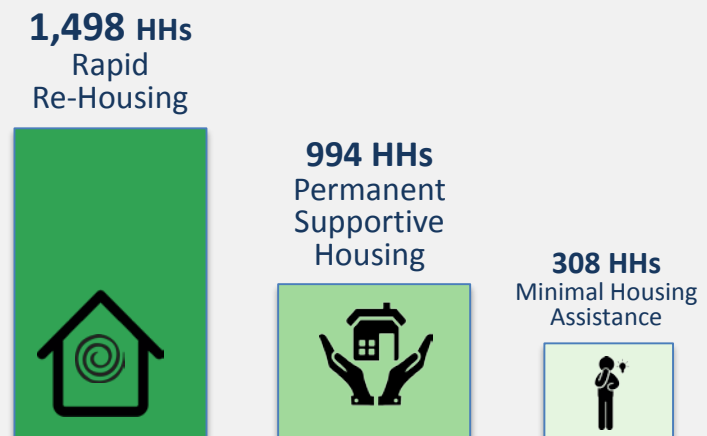
#### Affordable + Low Barrier housing units



### Vulnerability (according to VI-SPDAT Scores)

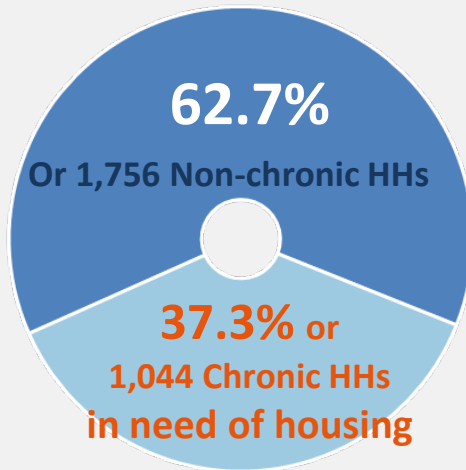


### Recommended Intervention Type



# KNOWN CURRENT NEED FOR THE CHRONICALLY HOMELESS IN AUSTIN

Total housing need =  
2,800 households



## Recommended Intervention Type

**523 HHs**  
Rapid  
Re-Housing



**521 HHs**  
Permanent  
Supportive  
Housing



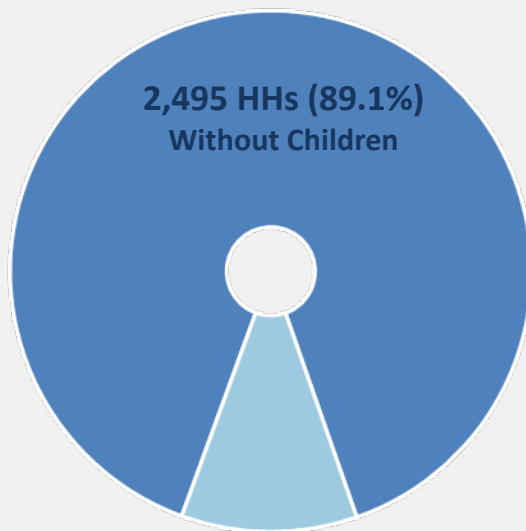
Total housing need =  
3,700 persons

**2,471**  
non-chronic  
persons  
(66.8%)

**1,229**  
chronically  
homeless  
persons  
(33.2%)



# KNOWN CURRENT NEED FOR LITERALLY HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN AUSTIN



Total housing need  
= 2,800 households

**305 HHs (10.9%)**

**Families with Children in need of housing**

**Affordable +  
Low Barrier housing units  
needed for 305 families**

**Chronically  
Homeless  
families= 58**

**Recommended Intervention  
for 305 families**

**256 HHs**  
Rapid  
Re-Housing



**49 HHs**  
Permanent  
Supportive  
Housing



105 HHs	→	3-persons units
100 HHs	→	2-persons units
55 HHs	→	4-persons units
36 HHs	→	5-persons units
15 HHs	→	6-persons units
3 HHs	→	7-persons units
1 HH	→	8-persons unit
1 HH	→	9-persons unit

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

## ESTIMATED NEEDS FOR 2,800 HOUSEHOLDS (3,700 persons)

### POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

### INTERCONNECTED NEEDS

#### Economic Security

**80%**

Persons unemployed



**2,291**

Jobs that hire the hard to employ & pay enough to afford a place to live

**58.2%**

Persons whose primary access to healthcare is a hospital or don't go for care at all



**2,153**

Persons that need improved health care access to appropriate settings

**52%**

Persons with no daily activities planned that bring fulfillment or happiness



**1,924**

Persons that need to reconnect to a healthy sense of community

**45%**

Persons with mental health issues



**1,665**

Persons that need mental health treatment

**20%**

Children under 18



**740**

Children that need family & housing stability

**15%**

Persons currently using substances



**555**

Persons that need substance use treatment

**3.31%**

Unaccompanied Youth



**122**

Young adults who need housing & other support

#### Health & Stability

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN 2015 COMMUNITY ASSETS

## 801 Emergency Shelter Beds

Women + Children	Adult Men	DV Survivors	Families	Veterans	Youth
314	230	106	95	36	20
Salvation Army	Front Steps	Safeplace	Casa Marianella Foundation for the Homeless	A New Entry	LifeWorks

## 1042 Permanent Supportive Housing Beds

Housing Authority of the City of Austin	494
Austin Travis County Integral Care (ATCIC)	245
Caritas	133
Foundation Communities	80
Front Steps	54
LifeWorks	20
Greendoors	16

## 376 Transitional Housing Beds

DV Survivors	Families	Youth	Veterans	Individuals
164	120	54	32	6
Safeplace	Salvation Army Blackland CDC	Lifeworks	Greendoors	Frontsteps

## 6 Recuperative Care beds

## 0 Beds for end-of-life/hospice services

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN ANNUAL PUBLIC INVESTMENTS



**Shelter**

**\$6.4 M**

**33.5%**



**Permanent  
Supportive  
Housing**

**\$5.9 M**

**31.1%**



**Prevention**

**\$2.7 M**

**14.2%**



**Rapid  
Re-Housing**

**\$2.3 M**

**12%**



**Transitional  
Housing**

**\$1.3 M**

**6.5%**



**HMIS +  
Planning**

**\$0.5 M**

**2.7%**

**TOTAL = \$19.1 million dollars/year**

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN 2016 PROJECTED COMMUNITY ASSETS?

## Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) Investments

Individuals housed in 2015 through RRH = **820**

RRH Public Investments in a given year = **2.3 Million**

Av. RRH Public Investments in a given year/ housed person = **\$2,804**

## Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Units

Estimated PSH units that turn over annually = **156**  
(15% of 1,042)

Newly PSH units to be created in 2016 = **100**  
(1/4 of the 400 currently committed 400 PSH units from the City of Austin)

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**256**

## Minimal Housing Assistance Resources

Overall shelter capacity = **808**

Overall recuperative beds capacity = **6**

Individuals that can be diverted in a year = **360**

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN PROJECTED 2016 GAP?

## Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)



## Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)



## Transitional Housing (TH)



# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN PROJECTED 2016 GAP?

## Shelter beds



## Medical Recuperative beds



## End-of-Life Service beds



# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

## TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

### 1. At least 2,800 households (3,700 people) are literally homeless and in need of 2,800 affordable and low-barrier housing units now.

➤ As of March 2016, our coordinated assessment process has surveyed and identified this many literally homeless persons as currently in need of housing. This is easily an undercount, considering not everyone who is literally homeless engages our system and a few providers in the community are not yet participating in our coordinated assessment process.

➤ What we currently need:

Given the household composition of the assessed homeless population, the types of housing units currently needed are at least:

- 2,300 studios or one-bedroom units,
- 350 one-to-two bedroom units, and
- 150 three-to-four bedroom units.



# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

## TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

### 2. Access to affordable and low barrier housing remains the single greatest challenge to ending homelessness.

- In a city whose population is rapidly increasing with unprecedented demand for rental units, and whose overall affordability is collapsing, finding affordable housing stands as the single most pressing challenge faced by individuals experiencing homelessness themselves and by the services providers assisting them.
- People experiencing homelessness face even greater barriers than those already experienced by lower income residents when it comes to securing housing. These barriers may include having criminal history, substance use, poor employment history, poor credit history, poor rental history and very low or no income at all.
- Households experiencing homelessness face enormous competition for a limited number of affordable units, not only competing with other low income residents but also increasingly competing with other moderate and middle income residents attracted to the same affordable units.
- As a community, we have been developing a system to successfully house persons experiencing homelessness by 1) creating partnerships with private landlords to make units accessible and low-barrier, 2) using flexible funding to provide incentives to landlords, and 3) working with affordable housing providers including Public Housing Authorities to create homeless preferences.

#### What we currently need is:

- Flexible funding to work directly with landlords and provide the right incentives to house the homeless population.
- Access to public affordable low-barrier housing units ranging from Public Housing Authorities, Tax Credit properties to other HUD-funded multifamily properties, where households are not screened out based on their criminal history or use of substances.
- Landlords who do not screen out tenants because on household's source of income and are willing to accept tenants with *Housing Choice Vouchers* or whose rent will be covered by other assistance programs.

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

## TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

### 3. Considerable larger public and private investments are needed to significantly reduce homelessness in Austin.

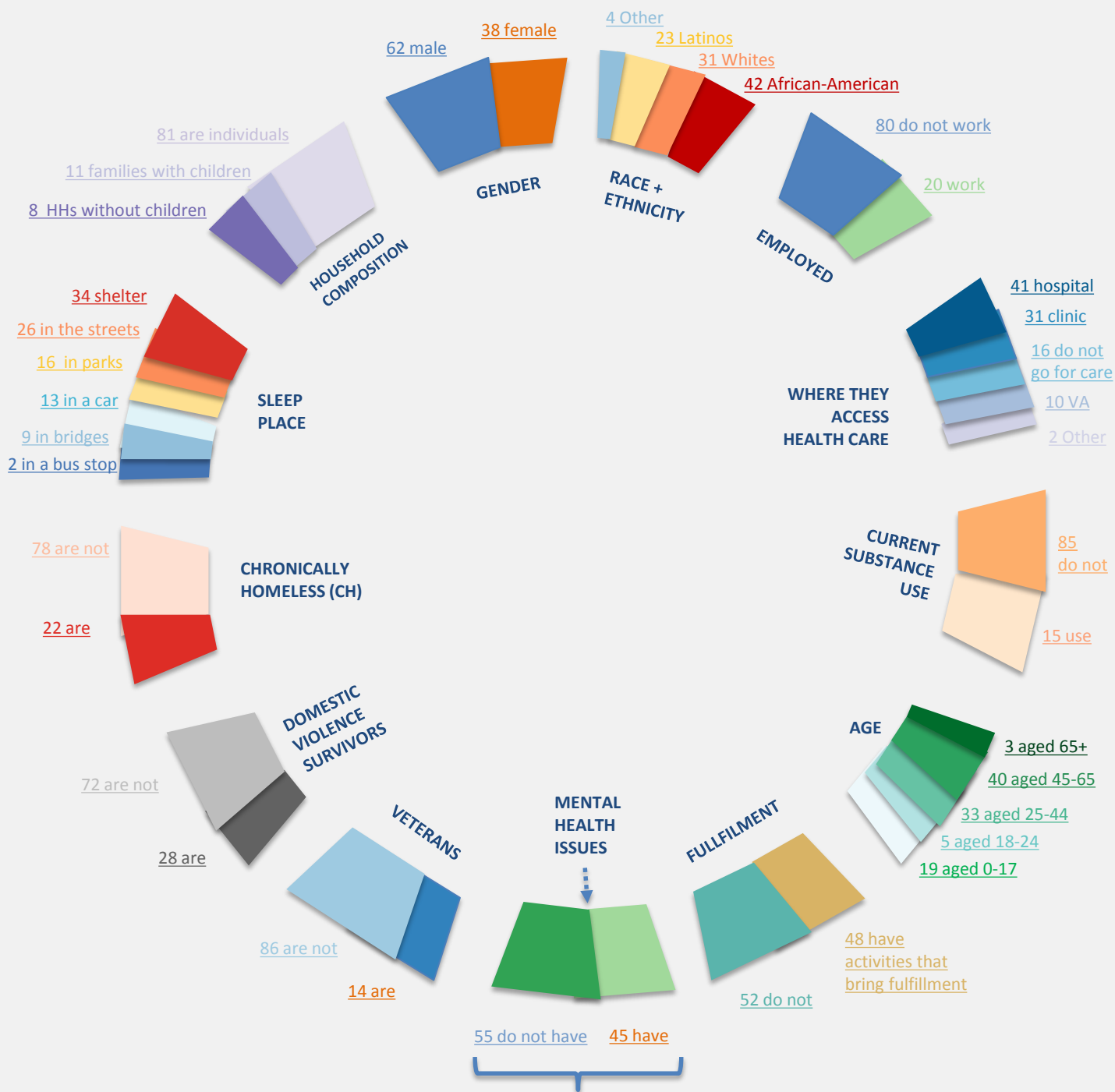
- Given the current needs for persons experiencing homelessness and our current assets, it will take a considerable larger allocation of resources to significantly reduce homelessness and get to a place where homelessness is brief, short and non-recurring for most persons who fall into homelessness.

- We know we have worked at a smaller scale.

#### What we currently need is:

- Creating a dedicated funding stream for local homeless services.
- Scaling up of programs that work such as Permanent Supportive Housing.
- Adopting new funding models that leverage private and public funds such as Pay for Success.
- Supporting the community at large as it works strategically to end chronic homelessness by 2017 and family and youth homelessness by 2020.

# SNAPSHOT HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN AS 100 PEOPLE



**100 PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

# HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN

## **YOUR THOUGHTS?**